

Ararocarpus — A Monstrosity

By JAMES SINCLAIR

SCHEFFER in Ann. Jard. Bot. Buit. 2 (1885) 10 described a monotypic Annonaceous genus, *Ararocarpus* from material collected by himself in Java. He named it *Ararocarpus velutinus* and compared it with *Annona* which differs from it in having only one seed to the carpel but which is similar in respect of its fused carpels. The carpels of *Ararocarpus* are, however, free at their apices for a short distance.

For a long time I tried unsuccessfully to locate the type specimen as I thought that there might be a possibility of the plant occurring in Malaya. Boerlage's picture of it in *Icones Bogoriensis* 1 (1899) Tab. 40 was then all I had seen of it. I followed Hutchinson, Kew Bull. (1923) 255 and placed it in the *Annonineae* along with *Annona*, *Raimondia* and *Rollinia* (non Malaysian genera) on account of the fused carpels [Sinclair in Gard. Bull. Sing. 14 (1955) 167 and 177]. I failed, however, to see that it ought not to be placed in that group on account of the several seeds per carpel.

I eventually found the type specimen of *Ararocarpus velutinus* in Leiden in April 1956 and then the picture was clear. I saw what *Ararocarpus* was. Boerlage, l.c. page 84, was not so far wrong when he placed it next to *Meiogyne* in his scheme of classification on account of the numerous seeds per carpel and the similar petals. He did, however, associate it with *Annona* in the same scheme and not unnaturally because of the fused carpels. He also described (with a query) a variety *tenuifolia* of *Ararocarpus* from a sterile specimen in Bogor, l.c. page 123.

Ararocarpus is actually a freak of *Meiogyne virgata* (Bl.) Miq., a species which has a wide distribution, occurring in Malaya, Borneo, Java and Sumatra. It is rather variable in the size of the leaves and the breadth of the petals. The carpels are sessile or nearly so and often touch each other at the base. The average number is 3 but sometimes 1, 2, 4 and 5 occur. In Scheffer's specimen there are 8–12 carpels and here, apparently, on account of their large number, they had no room to expand laterally so a fusion took place, resulting in the abnormal fruit. Naturally such monstrosities are rare so one need not be surprised when the plant was never collected again.

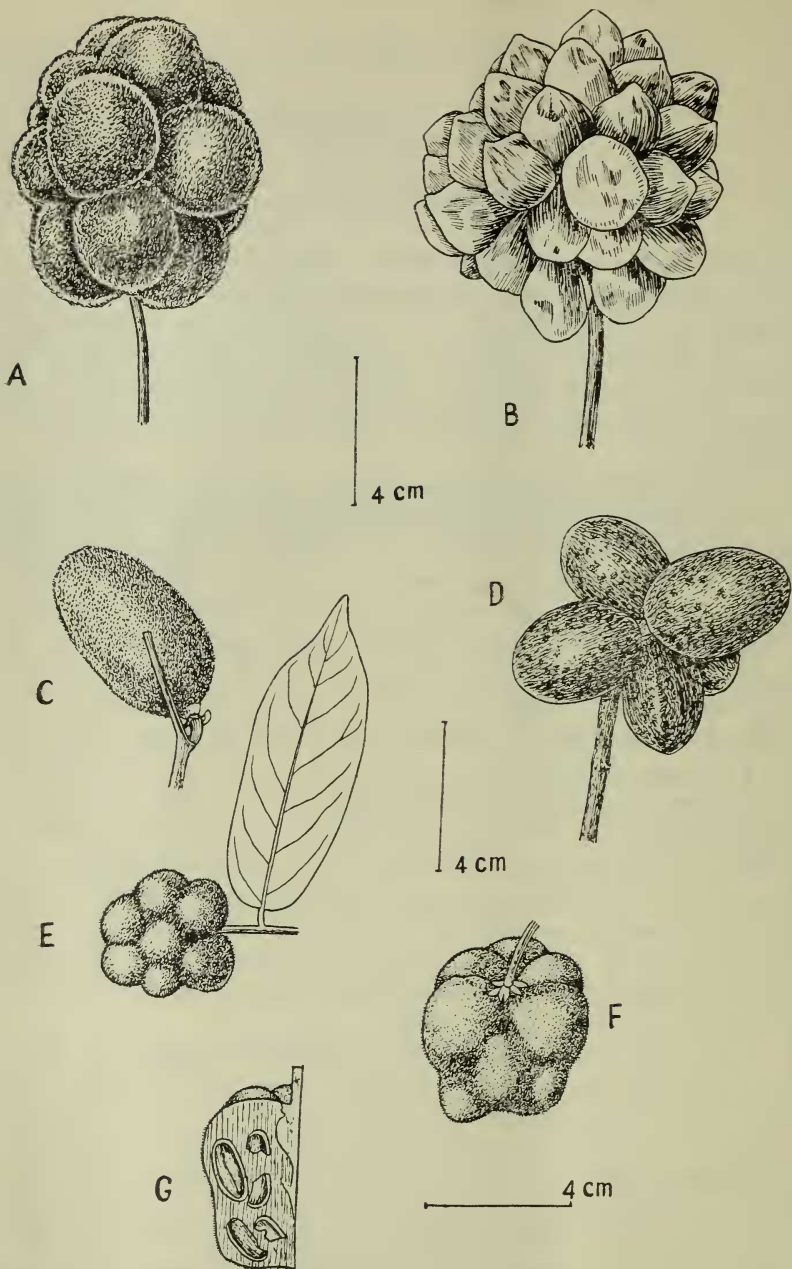


Fig. 1. Some Annonaceae carpels.

A, *Fissistigma lanuginosum*. B, *Goniothalamus ridleyi*. C, *Meiogyne virgata* with a single carpel. D, the same with five carpels. E, F, *Ararocarpus velutinus*. G, the same in longitudinal section. A from Kiah S.F.N. 32199. B from Sinclair, Seletar Forest. C from Henderson S.F.N. 19609. D from Daud & Tachun S.F.N. 35692. E-G copied from Boerlage's figure in Icon. Bog. 1 (1899) Tab. 40.

There are other species of Annonaceae with numerous, sessile or almost sessile carpels clustered together into a ball. Such examples are seen in *Fissistigma lanuginosum*, *Goniothalamus ridleyi* and *Uvaria spheocarpha*. One might very well expect to find these with fused carpels since there is little room for lateral or basal expansion of the carpels. However, let no more new names be invented for such abnormalities or monstrosities.